

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION



GREG GIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE: (406) 444-2074
FAX: (406) 444-2684PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

DECISION MEMO ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE

Cooke City Wastewater Collection and Treatment System Project Phase I

November 30, 2021

Cooke Pass, Cooke City, Silver Gate County Sewer District
Data Collection, Analysis, and Surveys – Administrative Action
45.020131, -109.933608
Park County

PURPOSE AND NEED

Cooke City is an unincorporated community located in Park County in south central Montana along U.S. Highway 212, surrounded by the Custer-Gallatin and Shoshone National Forests. The census population of Cooke City is 41 residents, however over 250,000 people pass through the community throughout the summer as they visit Yellowstone National Park (YNP). The Cooke City Water and Sewer District provides services to the Cooke City community. The community does not have a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system. Wastewater is treated by individual septic tanks and drain fields. Many businesses and residential homes do not have room for replacement drain fields with some leasing space from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) surrounding the community. The USFS has agreed to temporary lease drain fields and will discontinue leases if a long-term solution is not developed. Other septic systems and drain fields do not meet the current DEQ requirements and are regularly hydraulically overloaded due to inadequate sizing. Cooke City heavily relies on tourism for the local economy and if the current individual wastewater systems fail, businesses would be required to shut down due to unsanitary conditions. The chances of the local economy being severely hit by wastewater systems failures and the unsanitary conditions have prompted the community to plan for a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system.

The proposed project will be completed in two phases. Phase 1 will include the sampling, data collection, and modeling required to complete the non-degradation analysis and obtain the groundwater discharge permit. This phase will determine the design parameters of the community wastewater treatment system. This phase will also include completing the studies and surveys necessary to acquire the lands from the USFS. Phase 2 will design and construct the centralized wastewater collection and treatment system.

The Phase I data collection, surveys, and analysis is scheduled for completion during Fall – Winter 2022.

Explanation of the decision(s) that must be made regarding the proposed action:

DNRC approved the grant to provide funding for the Cooke Pass, Cooke City, Silver Gate County Sewer District Data Collection, Analysis, and Surveys.

DNRC is not required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for actions that qualify for a CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION or justified by a PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW; or are ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523(5)). These actions are subject to review for EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES that would require an EA or an EIS.

ACTIONS OF SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523)

- ✓ Administrative actions: routine, clerical or similar functions of a department, including but not limited to administrative procurement, contracts for consulting services, and personnel actions.
- ☐ Minor repairs, operations, or maintenance of existing equipment or facilities.
- ✓ Investigation and enforcement: data collection, inspection of facilities or enforcement of environmental standards.
- ☐ Ministerial actions: actions in which the agency exercises no discretion, but rather acts upon a given state of facts in a prescribed manner.
- ☐ Actions that are primarily social or economic in nature and that do not otherwise affect the human environment.

The project listed above meets the definition of Actions of a Special Nature, Categorical Exclusion or Programmatic Review including specified conditions and Extraordinary Circumstances.

Prepared By:	Name: Sonja Hoeglund Title: RRGL Program Specialist Email: shoeglund@mt.gov Date: 11/3/2021
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Approved By:	Name: Mark Bostrom Title: CARD Division Administrator
Signature:	DocuSigned by: <i>Mark W Bostrom</i> Date: 11/4/2021 10:16:26 AM MDT

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